# WEEK-DAY POEMS

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# WEEK-DAY POEMS

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BY

HUGH OWEN MEREDITH

SOMETIME FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE
PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS, QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY, BELFAST

PRESENTATION
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EDWARD ARNOLD
1911

AMICIS ET HOSTIBUS

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

Most of these poems are now published for the first time. Three have been printed before in the *Hereford Journal*, two in the *Granta*, one in the *Manchester Guardian*, and part of one in the *Westminster Gazette*. My thanks are due to the Editors of these papers, and also to a number of friendly critics who would probably prefer to be left unnamed.

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## DEDICATION

To you who build our destiny
  With neither hope nor care,
As coral rises in the sea
  Unconscious of the air,
To you whose hands are duteous
To work until night cover us—

To you, the men who rarely think
  And yet more rarely talk;
Who wine of freedom never drink,
  Nor on the mountains walk:
I loose an olive-bearing dove,
I offer what you will of love.

The lark that maddens in the skies,
  Does not contemn the earth,
Nor poet ever did despise
  The men who gave him birth.
Makers of money and of rhyme,
We stand together fronting time.

## THE AGES OF MAN

We children in our crowded home
  Had little food to eat,
Our breeding was the right to roam
  And scavenge in the street ;
My brothers died, my sister died,
  And I grew all accurst,
With pigeon breast, with surly pride,
  With hunger and with thirst.

When I was twenty years of age
  I earned my pound a week,
I ate and drank the princely wage
  And almost I grew sleek :
And then I married me a wife
  Who made ten shillings more ;
So rich we were, we thought that life
  Was easy for the poor.

It couldn't last: I loved the girl
  And madly she loved me—
We hardly heard the current swirl
  That bore us out to sea.
Eight bouncing children tumbled in,
  And though we overlaid
One, and another died of gin,
  Too many with us stayed.

I 've often thought that it would beat
  The man who tried to tell
(Even if he had felt) the heat
  And hungriness of hell:
But even in hell there is no pain
  Such as is known on earth,
To parents who a child have slain
  Before or after birth.

The devil doesn't know the cramp
  That settles round the heart,
When yesterday was a hopeless tramp
  For work, and it 's time to start;
In morning fog, or morning sun,
  You wake the silent street,
And a crust of bread or stony bun
  Is all you have to eat.

We lived and watched the children grow
  With vermin in their hair,
With hollow cheeks, with foreheads low,
  With eyes that looked despair :
One after one, they learnt at school
  That honesty will pay ;
One after one, they found the rule
  Broken upon life's way.

And now they brought their shillings back,
  Their shillings five or seven,
And hope once more had found a crack
  To shine on us from heaven ;
Our spending grew and counted up
  To two pounds ten a week :
Each body had daily bite and sup,
  And each grew almost sleek.

It couldn't last, the children moved
  And made their scattered beds,
Their mother died and I had proved
  Too hard my vigour's threads.
With hair gone grey and muscle stiff,
  Eye dim and hearing slow,
I stand at fifty on the cliff
  And feel the surf below.

I haven't what would buy a meal
  To feed a starving louse,
And I must beg, or I must steal,
  Or moulder in the House.
Will any kindly clergyman
  Explain the reason, why
God set me here to mar His plan
  Of earth and sea and sky?

## EVENING

THE day is gone, the night draws on,
  The public-houses fill:
The pipes are lit and 'bloody' John
  Confers with 'bloody' Bill.

Disjointed words, the rags of mind,
  The scrapings of the soul,
You 'd hardly think that in behind
  Humanity is whole.

Our fathers knew the name of flowers,
  The signs of heat and cold;
The sand that measured out their hours
  Was fine and clean as gold.

Our fathers—body, mind and heart—
  Ran bubbling into song,
For every neighbour bore a part
  To help the catch along.

Our fathers read the Bible tales:
  They could of God discourse,
How for each soul he tips the scales
  To better or to worse.

They say that ghosts no longer walk:
  Let 's hope none ever comes,
To watch his children think and talk
  The thoughts and words of slums.

## THE HUNGER-MARCH

STEP out, step out, against the rain
  And hold the banner high,
With hungry belly, hungry brain,
  With heart and tongue gone dry ;
Though rough and slouching dogs we be,
  The dregs of Englishmen,
The world shall hear of you and me—
  They 'll tell the children then !

When every man has food to eat
  And change of clothes to wear,
No honest worker on the street,
  No room, nor cupboard, bare ;
When all good English knives are free
  To cut and come again,
The world shall hear of you and me—
  They 'll tell the children then !

They 'll tell them how we grew in slums
  Ill-featured, underfed,
Of all the misery that comes
  To heart and hand and head,
When boy or girl is set to do
  The work they steal from men,
The world shall hear of me and you—
  They 'll tell the children then !

They 'll tell them of the march we 're on
  Around the Commons' House,
Of how we passed each restaurant
  Where gentlemen carouse,
Of how without a spot of tea
  We tramped from ten to ten,
The world shall hear of you and me—
  They 'll tell the children then !

There may be with us idle louts
  Who only want to shirk,
The system makes men ' ins and outs,'
  It trains them not to work !
Besides there 's many more than we
  Of idle gentlemen,
The world shall hear of you and me—
  They 'll tell the children then !

Then step it out against the rain
  And hold the banner high,
Don't think your lives have been in vain
  Because the years go by:
The change will come, the time will be
  In sixty years or ten,
The world shall hear of you and me—
  They 'll tell the children then!

## THE MACHINE

THE hooter goes—three minutes late!
  They 've cribbed our time again.
Gutter and road and houses straight
  Are washed with sooty rain,
And I have lived from eight to eight
  A century of pain.

For all day long my body went
  The simple motions through;
Each arm shot in and out and bent
  The way it has to do;
I almost thought that I was meant
  To be an engine too.

But though men clamp us close as leather—
  The damned machine and me,
Though foot and eye and hand they tether
  As we might lovers be,
And make us dance and sing together,
  There is no harmony.

There is no marriage. Steel may clutch
  And iron draw to thread
The fibre of a soul and smutch
  The glory God has made:
But they have neither sight, nor touch,
  Nor hearing: they are dead.

Their hearts are black, their hearts are cold:
  They never feel the smart
Of falling sick, of growing old,
  Of losing skill and heart.
They 're made to do what they are told,
  They dream no other part.

The men who own them keep them fine—
  They house and cleanse and feed,
And if one cough at all, or whine,
  With age, they give good heed
And scrap its body and refine
  To serve another need.

## THE MOTOR-BUS

How did we meet, my love and I,
  We two so bound together,
Blent as are blended moor and sky,
  Blue mist and purple heather ?

Of thousand thousand women one,
  One of a million men,
We nothing did till all was done,
  It happened there and then !

The plunging motor-bus along
  The worn macadam rocked,
Top-hampered by the weary throng
  That home to dulness flocked ;

Wet waterproof, rain-beaded fur,
  Soaked leather, steam and drip !
And under us the swishing whirr
  Of wheels that hardly grip !

The stem, the leaf, the flower of love
  Grew swift about our seat,
And we forgot the cloud above,
  The coldness of our feet;

But who it was had sowed the seed,
  Who made it blossom, who
Taught each of us the other's need—
  I know no more than you.

## PRIMROSE HILL

Oh joy remembered, when my love
  And I lay down on Primrose Hill,
And watched the daylight fade above
  The city that is never still.

The roaring tide of joy so beat,
  So loudly beat in us that day,
We hardly heard the horses' feet,
  The screaming 'bus, the cumbered dray.

The bridal beds rich lovers use
  Are softly poised on subtle springs,
No damp may strike, no coldness bruise,
  Beneath their silken coverings.

Their loves are uttered in strange words,
  To more than love their loves would reach,
Their loves are bound like prisoned birds
  Tormented into parrot speech.

But, ah! when youth and maiden meet,
  To feel the cold, to feel the damp,
To hear go by upon the street
  The slouching of a weary tramp!

To know that life's ill-nourished stream
  Has found at last an ampler sea,
That all the world is an evil dream
  And love a glad reality!

We two together did not speak,
  We had no need to understand,
We clung together, cheek to cheek,
  And breast to breast, and hand to hand.

The kindly night dropped down and hid
  The city that is never still:
Only the stars saw what we did,
  My love and I on Primrose Hill.

## THE LAST LETTER

YOUR limbs are rare, and all the hair
  That curls and clusters round your head
So sunny fine—I thought it mine
  To loosen over our marriage bed.

If men would give the means to live,
  You 'd love me, marry me, bear my son :
Love lasts but life is fugitive ;
  What profit of love where life is none ?

If things are so, if you must go
  Where love is buried and joy a ghost,
I 'd rather be where I can see,
  To be shut outside would hurt me most.

We 'll have no lies, we 'll bid good-byes :
  An honest man you 're right to wed.
Love 's not all life, you 'll be good wife
  And mother of children till you 're dead.

## NIOBE

WHAT led my son away from me?
Why did my daughter stray from me?
They were my very own,
They left me here alone.

The pride of life took hold of him,
It was the freezing cold of him
That made his heart a stone;
He left me here alone.

The pride of love did eat of her,
It was the burning heat of her
That wore her to the bone;
She left me here alone.

My son does not return to me,
My daughter does not yearn to me,
Though pride of each has flown;
They leave me here alone.

## THE FLOWER-GIRL

SITTING by my basket
  Under sun and shower—
What is that ? you ask it ?
  Do I love a flower ?
Sir, it is a casket
  For a fairy dower.

We of Covent Garden,
  (Where the roses blow)
All the things that harden,
  All that injure know !
And yet we can pardon
  London all her woe.

For whatever there is
  Done in her of shame,
Every day the fairies
  Calling us by name,
' Rosamunds ' and ' Maries,'
  Wipe away the blame.

## THE FLUNKEY

My eyes look straight before my nose
And stiff I stand from teeth to toes;
The food I bear, the powdered hair,
The padded coat, the padded calf—
These are all my outward half.

Her eyes look straight, her breathing goes
Like clockwork, and the painted rose
Is well in place on her white face.
These are all her outward shell:
I mark the woman there as well.

She is in my dreams—her hair unbound
And tightly round my fingers wound;
I taste her lips, her heart she slips
Into my hand; 'tis beating there—
I wake and see my attic bare.

The man in the moon, who walks the sky,
Is not so far away as I ;
He is not so cold, he is not so old :
Though ghastly time and ghastly space
Divide him from the earth's embrace.

Her moon am I : she swings my soul :
Her forces all my force control.
My foot obeys the path she lays—
No step beyond its bounds may stir,
No step may nearer move to her.

## THE BANK-HOLIDAY

WHERE shall we go wander, say,
On the next bank-holiday ?
To the river ? To the sands ?
Watch the cricket ? Hear the bands ?
No, there is a better way :
Here in London we will stay.

We will loiter up and down
All the dreariness of town :
We will flaunt our liberty
In the streets of slavery ;
Eat our sandwich at the Crown
Where the smoky chimneys frown.

You shall play the lady there ;
I with gentlemanly stare
Will pretend to bring to book
Waiter, paying-clerk and cook :
In our pub as in a rare
Restaurant we 'll banish care.

When the night at last has come,
We will seek a finer home
Than the mighty palaces
Where great monarchs take their ease,
Than the Vatican at Rome,
Than St. Paul's amazing dome.

Hampstead Heath shall be our walk,
Where the winds of heaven talk;
Where the stars across the skies
In their armies exercise;
Where the great cloud dragons stalk—
Moonlit mammoths white as chalk.

We shall there unlatch the door
Of the great God's treasure store;
We shall have the sky for roof,
Not despised and not aloof;
We shall have the earth for floor,
Be not rich, and be not poor.

## ANALYSIS OF BLASPHEMY

As I stood waiting in the mire
  That blackens Piccadilly,
A hoop red-hot from hunger-fire
  Went round my empty belly ;
It gripped and seared me like a tyre
  Red-hot that grips the felly.

If hungry men steal anything
  Your prison system claws them,
And if they beg, a blasted ring
  Of charity peeps and paws them—
Evil on evil showering
  Society outlaws them.

Ay, though men fill our bellies up
  No man will suffer for us,
No man will drink the scalding cup
  Of tears God sets before us,
And Christ went long ago to sup
  Amid the angelic chorus.

If pain could purify within
  And save us from the devil,
If pain were a just reward for sin
  God's balances were level—
But the pain I 'm thinking of has been
  The evil root of evil.

Let others take God's I O U
  As tendered in the churches,
And hope the days they anguish through
  Immortal bliss will purchase,
When to its ancient home anew
  Our drunken planet lurches.

I only see pain breeding pain,
  And ill more ill for ever :
I only look for poisoned grain
  From poisonous endeavour—
And one clean stab of deadly pain
  The tangled snare to sever.

## LINES

### SUGGESTED BY A CONVERSATION ON SMALL HOLDINGS WITH AN ENGLISH COUNTRY GENTLEMAN

Not know my place? The cottage sty,
  As leaky as a tub,
The rafters gaping to the sky,
  Five miles fron any pub!

The heavy clay that clogs the feet,
  The rain, the bitter wind;
The caste that stifles all the sweet
  Fresh breezes of the mind.

Parson and squire are gentlemen,
  Farmers are in between,
But we who scarce can use a pen,
  Or keep our bodies clean,

Like mouldered grain of corn that rats
  Have eaten in the ear,
In corduroys and scarecrow hats
  We rot and sicken here.

I asked the County Council once
  To hire me land to farm ;
They said : ' This lout's impertinence
  Would keep a beggar warm.

He 's not content to work for us
  Who feed and house and pay
Him and his like, oh, scandalous !
  He wants to make his way.

He wants to take his master's land
  And cut it into strips,
He wants the bridle in his hand,
  The bit between our lips ;

But most he wants (and *this* it is
  That fans our wrath to flame),
He wants to scare our partridges
  And clear the land of game.'

The County Council answered me,
  They said : ' We much regret,
It 's most unfortunate, but we
  Have got no land to let.

It may be in a year or two,
  Or else in ten or twenty,
If there are any left of you
  We 'll hire you land in plenty.'

How many of us will there be
  When twenty years are done ?
Go study your statistics, ye
  Who rule in Albion.

Go to the city's dirt and din,
  Go and add up the sums,
The thousands you have driven in
  To live the life of slums.

## MORITURUS

### I

You mean to hang me by the neck
  When fourteen days are gone,
You mean to leave my body's wreck
  For lime to feed upon.

You do not know where I shall go,
  Nor care what I shall be ;
You will not have me here below,
  You will not suffer me.

What use of words ? You have the power—
  Maybe you have the right.
Useless to argue with the hour,
  To wrestle with the night.

One thing you have no right to do :
  It is a certain sin
To bruise the soul of one you knew,
  Of one who was your kin.

Almighty God, look down and see
  And bid your Angel note,
That fourteen days men torture me
  Before they stretch my throat.

II

All through the trial I kept up:
  Tight lips and level eyes,
I watched the jury taste each cup
  Of flattery and lies.

No change of cheek, no shift of glance,
  No faltering, no tears:
I wore a steady countenance
  Above my hopes and fears.

The dread of death that waits in man
  To turn him to a brute,
I chained and boarded up—his plan
  He might not execute.

But as I listen near his cell
  And spy him in his bed,
I see his fingers working well,
  I hear the file of dread.

Why have you given him days of grace ?
  I know that he will come
And stand before me face to face,
  Biting upon his thumb.

III

You 'd have me fear ?  You 'd have me feel
  The dread of death within ?
You 'd have my manhood sicken, reel,
  And swoon upon my sin ?

Inquisitors in olden days
  Waxed bloody, as they tell,
Because they thought a fagot's blaze
  Might save a soul from hell.

They charred the body down to ash,
  But you the spirit roast :
If manhood flinch beneath the lash,
  Is that the Holy Ghost ?

Is God a fool ?  Does He not see
  The working of the mind ?
Does He not smell the leprosy
  Beneath repentance whined ?

Would He not rather have me die
  Impenitent, unshriven,
Than hear my tortured manhood cry—
  The manhood He has given ?

## WASTE

THIRTY years old, a finish'd form,
An Englishwoman chaste but warm,
With temper'd will, with mind erect,
With eyes that friendliness expect.

I do my work, I draw my pay,
I have the right to yea and nay ;
What better woman will you find,
To bear a child, to train its mind ?

Into my dreams the children steal ;
I feel their hands, their lips I feel,
I hear them sob, I hear them moan,
I wake and find myself alone.

Because I have not met the man
Who can love me and whom I can ;
If I should dare maternity
Women and men would howl at me.

Who made my mind and spirit so
That I the moods of children know?
Who made the glands within my breast,
Whence the glad milk might be express'd?

Not God—if England worships God!
For men would fear His anger'd rod,
Would fear to crush the woman who
Did what God's hand has set her to.

## A SONG OF LONDON

Down, down, down and down,
  Many fathoms deep!
They have buried London town
  The tears her children weep.

I tied a stone about my song,
  I sunk it in the waters:
In the tears that do belong
  To London's sons and daughters.

It sank through eternity,
  Ere it bottom found:
From the depths came up to me
  Silver globes of sound.

## ROBERT BURNS IN LONDON

WHERE Thames runs under Charing Cross,
And railway lines the river cross,
  A little garden lies
With asphalt paths and flower-beds
And seats for tired hearts and heads,
  For lovers' tiffs and ties.
And there I found, one day of wet,
  When I had tramped for miles,
The sanest soul that ever yet
  Made music in our isles.
    I lightened and brightened
      As when the sun returns,
    To meet with and greet with
      Your statue, Robert Burns.

And since that day I cannot pass
Your little plot of flowers and grass
  Upon my daily walk,
I must go in and find a seat
For half an hour below your feet,
  And hear your spirit talk.

For spite of all the hungry years
  Gone by since you were dead,
Your voice is native in my ears—
  It touches heart and head.
    I 've thought through and wrought through
      Your lusty muse so long ;
    Come take of and make of
      My breath another song.

Though London 's many miles away
From where you saw the light of day,
  It 's not so far removed
As towns in the Antipodes,
Across ten thousand miles of seas,
  Where you are known and loved.
Nor need my English speech oppress
  Or make you fear your fame ;
I 've read you in a German dress,
  And found you still the same.
    All places and races
      You could compel to sing.
    To inherit your spirit
      Would make a slave a king.

The dewy eve, the golden morn,
Are lovely still, the barley-corn
  Still yields as grand a brew ;

Still with the sky-lark may be heard
The thrush, the linnet, every bird
  You told your trouble to.
And though, alas, above your head,
  The sky is not so clear
As where you wrought for daily bread
  And held your honour dear,
    We 're needing and heeding
      Your presence on the scene
    Who are striving and driving
      To make our London clean.

Oh, things are done at every turn
To make your downright temper burn
  (I think I hear you swear).
We haven't lost the love of pelf,
We haven't lost the love of self,
  Men had when you were there.
We 've lawyers who will trouble rouse
  Between poor foolish friends ;
We 've clergymen who use God's House
  To serve the Devil's ends.
    Come down then, and frown then
      The way you used to do.
    Come sing them and sting them—
      The sanctimonious crew.

Our Parliament is talking still;
O'er factious vote and foolish bill
  The politicians wrangle.
A shade less dreary the debating,
Since Gladstone died you 'll hear no Latin;
  But much the same old tangle.
There 's no important difference when
  It comes to fooling voters
Between your country gentlemen
  And company promoters.
    They 're all full of soulful
      Desire to save our isle
    From traitors and praters—
      You 'll recollect the style.

And genius still in threadbare suits,
And nincompoops in patent boots,
  You 'll find in London here.
We 've men who gamble, men who drink,
We 've men who after women wink,
  And do not leave it there.
Some men are far too quick in act,
  And some are far too slow,
Some get promotion, some get sacked,
  In Fortune's ebb and flow.

Though times change and climes change,
One thing they may not wear—
We men yet retain yet
Our human character.

And now let 's laugh. The earth and sky
Are sometimes wet, but often dry
Without a threat of cloud.
No man 's without his miseries,
But then, what compensating bliss
Just Heaven has allowed.
The gladsome thrill that lovers feel,
The fervent grip of friends,
For every kind of human ill
Should more than make amends.
The kind days the blind days
Should teach us to forget
In loving and proving
The worth of living yet.

I 've had my day among the girls,
I 've played with fingers, played with curls,
The worst we 'll hope 's forgiven.
I 've had my friends, and have them still,
And know that I shall have them till
God summons them to Heaven.

I 've stood on many a mountain ridge
  To watch the sun go down,
I 've seen the Thames from London Bridge
  Reflect the lights of town.
    I 've lived on and thrived on
      The best a man may reach ;
    The fairest, the rarest,
      Of human thought and speech.

In wedded happiness I live,
That 's best of all the world can give,
  However far you wander.
But hush ! that woman over there !
Talk of the Devil—I declare
  My wife is coming yonder.
She sent me out to fill the purse
  By working at a job ;
If she should find me writing verse,
  Why, I shall catch it, Rob.
    So fare well, and bear well
      Until my luck returns.
    I 'll borrow to-morrow
      To gossip with you, Burns.

## AULD LANGSYNE

DRAW round the fire, put chestnuts on,
  And let the cups be set :
Although we live in Paddington,
  We 'll keep old Christmas yet.
We 'll toast the year that 's almost gone—
  The ill of it forget :
We 'll toast the year that draws upon—
  Windy, or warm, or wet.

We 'll drink them in the scalding tea,
  We 'll drink them in the beer,
We 'll drink them in the good whisky,
  In mellow gin and clear :
For whatsoever thing may be
  Of past or coming year—
It shall not sever you and me
  Who drink together here.

Then friends and neighbours standing round,
  Take hands and hands of mine :
Fate shall not drive us from the ground,
  We 'll keep unbroken line :
In vain the skies above have frowned—
  We have not asked a sign :
So strong are knit, so closely bound,
  The loves that us entwine.

## THE MAKERS OF LONDON

CALL up, call up, the huddled dead,
  The solid English citizens
Who fought for London and who bled,
  Who built her walls, who loosed her chains.

Call up the women who have died
  In child-bed, who have children borne;
The girl, the virgin, and the bride;
  Enraptured maid, and maid forlorn.

Call up the men of straining thews,
  Who made them bricks of scanty straw;
The men of mind, who bred the use
  Of Art, of Science, and of Law.

Their blood it is that warms our veins,
  And our dexterity they wrought;
We know their knowledge, and our brains
  Are filled from fountains of their thought.

## NIGHT IN LONDON

### I

A HANSOM when the clock struck two
  Passed by with padding tread ;
It seemed as though a mouse went through
  A chamber of the dead.

The lamps are lit along the street,
  Like tapers round a bier :
All hollowness, all silence, meet
  And grow together here.

It is not death : she has not died :
  Listen, a stir ! a sigh !
The monster turning on her side,
  To watch the night go by.

### II

She lies awake and darkness tells
  The groping of her brains,
In sudden din of wizard bells
  And clank of ghostly trains.

A hush once more! the mighty lungs
  Silently rise and fall:
The iron throats, the iron tongues,
  Are silent one and all.

Crimson and yellow flags of dawn
  Run up the whiten'd east,
The sable curtains are withdrawn
  That hid the couchéd beast.

## 3000 A.D.

THREE thousand Anno Domini,
What kind of city will London be ?

Green mounds and grey beneath the sun,
Like Nineveh and Babylon ?

A golden new Jerusalem,
Putting the Apocalypse to shame ?

A herd of men, a steam, a stir,
Greater than now and wretcheder ?

I cannot tell, but I know this :
It will have been what now it is.

What London is, be our concern :
Get we to work, it is our turn.

Far in the past, fore-runners made
The thing they would, not idly played !

And every generation still
Shall thrive or moulder—as it will.

## ENFRANCHISEMENT

When I pace the stony floors
Of London's prison corridors,
And mark the rows of number'd cells
In each of which a captive dwells,
I know 'tis otherwise with me:
Others are bound, but I am free.

Vainly my fate has done her worst:
I have a fountain against thirst,
I have a cupboard fill'd with bread,
I have a mate who shares my bed.
No man is slave who has the three:
Others are bound, but I am free.

I drink all tears that fall from eyes:
I eat a portion of all sighs:
I walk with Pain, and in my bed
She lays her head beside my head.
Of prison doors I have the key:
Others are bound, but I am free.

## THE SECOND FLOOD

When the rain is pouring down
On the roofs of London town,
When the streets reflect the light
Like lamplit canals at night,
And the hissing heavens frown
On the men they soak and drown,

I hear a voice; it calls to me:
'Soon the second flood will be,
You were chosen that you should
Build an ark of gopher wood,
Bolt of iron, limb of tree,
Victual her and put to sea.

Lest the breath of life should fail,
Choose out seven souls to sail,
Choose out seven souls to be
Carriers of destiny;
For the rest 'tis no avail,
They are vermin in God's pail.

Choose a worker with his hand,
Choose an owner of much land,
Choose a poet, choose a priest,
Choose a wicked atheist,
Choose a maid unwedded, and
Choose a mother gravely grand.

Forty days of storm and stress
On the watery wilderness,
Forty days you shall be tempted,
Who from death are thus exempted ;
And the horror shall express
Of each soul the inwardness.

And each soul shall nourish up
Charity and faith and hope,
And the dove returning will
Bring the olive in his bill,
And at last your ark shall stop,
Grounded on a mountain top.'

## WAR

TEAR up, tear up, the title-deeds of peace,
  The charter of the nations! Tie the vein
  Of sea-born commerce, and upon the plain
Let armies trample down the year's increase!
Whether some harlot's beautiful caprice,
  Or the vexed mood of valiant gentlemen,
  Has lit the beacon on the hills again—
What matter? Of such are Fate's accomplices.
Let sulphurous reek and the salt taste of blood
  Be set before the a-hungered multitude
    In maddening goblets brimmed with wine of hate:
Meet recompense for labours in the mud
  Which year by year have patiently renewed
    The insecure foundations of our state.

## IN THE PARKS

CHILDREN playing in the parks
Merry mad as yearling larks,
While the nurse-maid and the mother
Stand embarassing each other,

Children, make the most of spring!
Summer 's quite another thing;
Autumn means that you grow old,
Winter threatens you with cold.

They 'll prepare you all too soon
For the heavy heat of June,
For the ripeness of September,
For the dark days of December.

They will send each boy to school
Lest he should grow up a fool,
They will bind each girl in stays
For the remainder of her days.

Ah, if you could only stay,
Children, as you are to-day!
Men and women fetters wear,
Only larks are free as air.

## SEEN AT A RAILWAY STATION

I saw to-day a lovely daughter
  Of England's peerage at a station
Attended by a railway porter,
  Chivalrous without ostentation.

Her caste was like a barb-wire fence:
  His supple strength, his uniform,
His clear outstanding competence,
  All these could not the woman warm.

What passed in him I do not know,
  I can but give you my opinion:
He looked upon himself as low,
  Was proud, if proud, to be her minion.

I doubt if it crossed either's mind,
  That he was man and she was woman:
He only thought her rather kind—
  Kind, but at bottom super-human.

And she, that English woman, who
  Shut in an English home has played
And lounged her English girlhood through,
  She scarcely knows how men are made,

Even if she has broken rules,
  And read her father's *Lemprière*—
No man beneath the rank of fools
  Would seem a gentleman to her.

## CLOTHES

THE lilies of the valley!
  The lilies of the field!
If I could see you Sally,
  Without the silly shield
Of flounces, furbelows,
Petticoats and goodness knows
All the tape and sealing wax a young girl
    grows!

If I could see the lightness,
  The whiteness that I dream,
If I could see the brightness,
  The glory and the gleam—
I 'd fall down at your feet,
Kiss them and murmur sweet
Nothings, like the shepherds when the nymphs
    they meet.

Boys and girls in London,
  What nymph and shepherd do,
They have to leave it undone;
  Alas for me and you!
When a man meets a miss,
Hats won't let them kiss:
'Not until you promise me,' her hatpins hiss.

## THE MODERN PROMETHEUS

He lies no longer on the mountain peak
Tethered and nailed with iron, nor do skies
Whitehot or freezing longer exercise
The wrath against him that Jove bade them wreak :
No more the vulture with besprinkled beak
Feeds on his entrails. Ah, how low he lies !
What action, which no pen may dramatise !
What utterance, which no poet's mouth may speak !
But deeply whelmed under the quenching clay
Still, still it burns—the spark he stole from heaven.
Knowledge increases. Jove still has his fear
Lest the whole lump one tiny atom leaven,
Lest night be cloven and kindled from the rear,
Lest all men see his works in the light of day.

## 'NEIGHBOURS'

'Twas in a County Council flat
  He lived next door to me:
High over huddled houses—that
  Was all there was to see.
And when we met each raised his hat,
  So neighbourly were we.

## 'THINKING IMPERIALLY'

In London docks the sails are furl'd
Of ships that come from all the world:
Piston and screw find rest at last,
That over every sea have pass'd.

Here are delivered by the crews
All things a nation needs to use:
They bring us meat, they bring us drink,
They bring more thoughts than we can think.

If England holds the world in fee
And tribute draws from every sea—
Is every shore, is every wave,
More free thereby, or more a slave?

## WAGES

### I

All the ways of London meet
  In a mighty market square;
Clean and dirty hands and feet,
  What bring they to auction there?

We buy the men who make our laws,
  We buy the judge of wrong and right,
And men sell themselves because
  Men will pay to have them fight.

We buy wives to share our bed,
  We buy men to heal our sick,
Churchyard men to bury our dead,
  Prison men to bury our quick.

Weary hands for weary work,
  Empty brains for empty thought,
Men who strive and men who shirk,
  Are in London sold and bought.

## II

Men must sell and men must buy,
  Else an end to every nation :
But I see no reason why
  We should suffer exploitation.

Barristers are sometimes rich,
  Doctors earn a living wage ;
Female hinds, who paste and stitch,
  Get too little, youth and age.

London's market is a hell,
  Shame is on her market halls,
Not because men buy and sell,
  But because the weights are false.

## THE MONEY-MARKET

LONDON speaks : her word goes forth
East and West, South and North ;
All the nations heed her voice,
London makes her choice :

Bids the nations starve or feast ;
North and South, West and East,
Meal is set, or meal deferr'd,
As she speaks the word.

War or peace, as likes her best ;
South and North, East and West,
Flags unfurl and flags are furl'd
Over all the world.

What is the tongue in London's mouth,
West and East, North and South ?
What is it that makes her bold ?
'Tis her tongue of gold.

## A CHRISTMAS BIRTH

On Christmas eve in Pimlico
The doctor trudged through rotting snow:
Six wakeful nights since he had slept,
And now a seventh to be kept.
The doctor swore: 'before the morn
Another devil to be born!'

Was there an angel Gabriel
Glad tidings to the world to tell?
Was there a star above the roof?
Was God's attention still aloof?
Or did He in this wondrous wise
Eternal purposes disguise?

Since evil at the core of things
Eats cankerously, the King of kings
Must stoop far lower than a stable
By kindly beasts made acceptable.
I say before His kingdom come
He must be born in a London slum.

This room was small and bare enough
With rotted wood and rotted stuff;
It stank and crawled, a human sty!
Such harbourage to sanctify
Were a triumph and a deed
Fit for the Son of God indeed.

## THE CHILD

A son of man he was, no doubt,
  Though no man called him son :
His evil fate was written out
  Ere it was well begun ;

Mind underfed, ill-nourished heart,
  An undeveloped frame,
A bubble on the racing mart,
  An unremembered name !

No shepherds heard the heavens ring
  With tidings of his birth,
No wise men offered gifts, no king
  From out of all the earth.

But when his mother saw his face
  And laid it to her breast,
She found in all the dreary place
  Divinity confessed.

The night of pain and terror fled
  Before a golden morn :
She lay rejoicing in her bed
  Because a man was born.

## AN HEIR OF EMPIRE

THE first day that he was born
He was fair as any morn ;
He was perfect in each part,
Straight of limb and strong of heart ;
He was soft and delicate
As the first born in the state.

The first year he struggled through
With heavy eyes and waxen hue,
Dirty head and spotted skin,
A commencing taste for gin ;
Still when he was pleased, the child
Like a tired angel smiled.

Nine years old, he sate in school
One of sixty under rule
Of a dull anæmic girl—
Her body slack, her mind a whirl
Of useless, ill-digested, knowledge
From the teacher's training college.

At fourteen he earned a living,
For father's beer his future giving ;
Two years as a sweated lad,
Two years of odd jobs he had ;
The eighteenth year its seasons ran
And turned him out—' God's Englishman.'

## IN SCHOOL

Two and two are four,
Three and three are six,
Bench and desk and door,
Walls and a clock that ticks:
'Two and two are four,
Three and three are six.'
But oh for the budding quicks
Where, far from London's roar,
Body and soul may mix
In a life worth living for!

Where nothing is added up,
Yet somehow growth takes place;
Where a golden buttercup
Turns into a fairy's face;
Where a child with God may sup
And sleep in God's embrace.

## THE NEWS-BOY

SELLING papers in the street
We strive to earn enough to eat.
Night and day you hear us cry,
News of all the world to buy!

You read not truth, if truth be there,
  Nor mark in daily papers,
Nor understand: your minds are air
  Choked with sooty vapours.

What you read is printed words,
  Only paper and ink:
We ourselves are sharpened swords
  And cannot make you think.

What is the word of an earthly king,
  How he looked and smiled?
Is any of these as great a thing
  As the cry of a hungry child?

## GHOSTS

FENLAND phantom, smoke of wood,
  Steam of acre, sea-fog wraith,
Trailing mantle, shroud and hood,
  Jaws and finger-bones of death,
Ghosts of ill and ghosts of good—

From wherever dead men sleep,
  In the quiet churchyards laid,
Under water fathoms deep,
  In the mounds that druids made,
Gathering on the wind they sweep.

Through the dimlit town they roam—
  Every square and every street,
Where the tides of traffic foam,
  Where men part and where men meet,
And they enter every home.

Countless and continuous,
  Through the chamber, up the stair,
Mournfully they steal to us,
  Kiss our lips and stroke our hair,
Dumbly greet their children thus.

## LONDON'S DEAD

THE voice of one who standing cries
  Across an empty market-place—
His cheeks are hollow and his eyes
  Burn with a flame of steadfastness.
I heard the voice; the voice it said:
'Bring out your dead, bring out your dead.'

The high moon riding in her power
  Queenly above the city shone,
As in the night, as in the hour,
  When she looked down on Babylon;
Thin veil of cloud she drew to grace
The marble rigours of her face.

And men brought forth from every room,
  Naked or in grey linen wound,
The corpse to fill a royal tomb,
  The corpse to lie in humble ground:
Reverent hand, uncovered head,
They bore the bodies of their dead.

Young men and old, the maid, the bride,
  The children of too tender years;
With stooping soul, with soaring pride,
  With measurement of joy or tears:
Silently through the silent night
They came, they went, they passed from sight.

## PLAGUE!

THE rats who live in London's drains—
The plague is breeding in their veins,
And men are setting in the cats
To kill the rats, to kill the rats.

Lest, as they were, things be again,
When plague was in the veins of men,
When chalkmarked houses men went by
And let men die, and let men die.

Are want of work and want of ease
Less evil than plague-bearing fleas ?
If cold and hunger us infest,
Is it no pest, is it no pest ?

We chalk the crosses on each door
To kennel up the stricken poor ;
But as they rot and as they die
They taint our sky, they taint our sky.

## THE SOUL OF LONDON

I PASSED out of the theatre's heat,
I jostled through the crowded street.
Fog and lamp had filled the air
With yellow gloom and yellow glare;
The raw, damp, dripping of the town
Stung and thrilled me up and down.

But the soul of London dwells
Most of all in London smells.
These I savoured as a boy,
Homing, homing, mad with joy;
Lordly in the unusual cab
Suddenly I felt them stab—
Mingled pleasure, mingled pain,
Back in London once again.

## THE SANDS OF LONDON

### I

DUMB millions, we in London dwell
  'Mid unknown elements at strife:
The issue no man may foretell—
  Or England's death, or England's life.

### II

Before the winds of chance we drift
  From night to night, from day to day,
As sands across the desert shift
  Scirocco born in Africa.

We travel East, we travel West,
  We travel, travel North and South:
And still have famine for a guest
  And win the wage of hand-to-mouth.

The house that held us yesternight
  Deserted sees the morning sun,
We travel fast, we travel light,
  We travel, travel, every one.

No change is best, no change is worst:
  'Neath skies that flame and skies that frown,
Nor rain, nor dew, redeems from thirst
  The drifted sand of London town.

III

Another life we may not know.
  For whether we were London born,
Or left the country long ago,
  The leaping brooks, the standing corn,

Or heard in places oversea
  Dim rumours of a liberal sky,
Once drawn into the desert, we
  In London live—in London die.

IV

Year after year the desert grows,
  As all about its margin green
Sand of the desert overflows
  And wins the earth where crops have been.

We fill the water-course, we stanch
  With bitter sand its sunny smile,
We wither forest leaf and branch,
  We choke the country mile by mile.

Nor wealth nor pride withstands our march :
  Temple and palace vainly shone,
Whose ruined column, ruined arch,
  Cumber the ways we travel on.

V

Our sterile atoms hardly feel
  The quick desires of mother earth,
We mingle as the heavens wheel,
  But no abundance bring to birth.

Few sorry plants we save alive—
  Sun-dried and withered, stalk and stem ;
How shall their stunted nature thrive ?
  The desert is the end of them.

VI

Vainly we offer up to God
  Burnt sacrifice He may not heed,
That He should loosen with His rod
  Windows in heaven at our need.

He made the seas, He filled their bed,
  Planted the shore with down and hill,
Set the sun's radiance overhead
  Aerial moisture to distil.

He taught the air its interchange
  Of warm and cool from zone to zone,
He taught the nimble air to range
  Obedient to one law alone.

Whether He wakes, a timeless cause:
  Whether He sleeps, eternal sleep:
He shall not change unchanging laws,
  Though men should moan and women weep.

Man, only man, the brittle force,
  The unguessed, pregnant, multitude,
Can swing the seasons from their course
  And bind the wind to serve his mood,

Draw down the lightning with a thread,
  Congeal the waters, melt the snows,
Can make the sea give up her dead,
  The desert blossom like the rose.

## 'BLOOD AND IRON'

I HEAR the fifes, I hear the drums,
  They call us to the war ;
After the fight the kingdom comes,
  It cannot be before.

Let windy words of compromise
  And words of barter cease,
Let men of every rank arise
  And snap the chains of peace.

Let London feel the burning blood
  And feel the iron cold,
Too ample is her fortune's flood,
  Her harlotry too old.

For London's truths, for London's lies,
  For London's hopes and fears,
Be iron in our souls, our eyes
  Be brimmed with blood-red tears.

## EDUCATION

### I

I WATCH the children in the school,
Child of knave and child of fool,
Child of spirit, child of earth,
Weakly sprung or strong from birth.

What medicine can their teachers use,
That the knowledge which should loose
Proves another cord to bind,
Falls like curtains on the mind ?

Whether they are stuffed with facts,
Or exercised in manual acts,
Taught in poems, taught in prose,
Withering them their knowledge grows.

Little children want to know
How the wheels of wonder go ;
Little children beg to hear
Tales of fun and tales of fear.

Girls and boys are still alive
In standard four and standard five :
Only standards six and seven
Are to death and dulness given.

Mind and body peter out
In giggling girl and lumpish lout,
Void of feeling, void of sense,
And ashamed of innocence.

Strong ones flounder in the fen,
Penny-dreadful girls and men !
And the weak return to brute
Hooligan and prostitute.

II

And I watch those other ones
Who of gentlemen are sons,
Who are sent away from home
To learn of Greece and learn of Rome.

Much the same is true of them :
Straight they grow from leaf to stem ;
When they should begin to bear,
Swift, a blight is in the air.

All the younger boys are quick
Even at arithmetic.
'Tis the older boy who thinks
Every kind of knowledge stinks.

III

Many reasons have been given
For this change about eleven—
'Bad surroundings,' 'sexual stir,'
'Lack of exercise and air,'

'Lack of training for the teachers,'
'Lack of stimulating preachers,'
'Daily games,' and 'Sundays slow,'
To one and all I answer: 'No.'

Where an ill so general is
'Mid such great diversities,
A general answer you must find,
If you 'd satisfy a mind.

Such an answer I have made.
Once for all let it be said:
'Englishmen have no respect
For the fruits of intellect.'

## IV

Little children growing up,
As they sip at learning's cup,
Never dream that those who hold it
Are the very men who 've sold it.

Little boys and girls at school,
Bluffed by the parental rule,
Never dream their parents wise
Every learned man despise.

Never dream that when they go
Into school, the masters know
First and foremost of their duties
Is to keep them ' sleeping beauties.'

As they grow they find it out :
First they wonder, then they doubt ;
At the last from their confusion
Draw the inevitable conclusion.

Since the aim of schooling is
To confine their faculties,
What they have of mind and wit
In the end revolts from it.

## BURNT LETTERS

Food for the fire I bind you, barren sheaves,
Love's ruined harvest, blighted by mistrust;
Not time has turned your characters to rust
Like trace of dry blood on dead aspen leaves.

Oh, no, her very heart did bleed above
The passionate utterance! For an arrow keen,
Shot by malignant fate her breasts between,
Fixed in her heart the barb of poisoned love.

Blacken and char and kindle, as long ago
The fire blazed out when our farewell was spoken:
Crumble to ash; and sleep a sleep unbroken,
Colder than mounded pyramids of snow.

## SONNET SEQUENCE

### I

SINCE this one moment is eternity,
    Since all that was before and is to come
    Sounds in our ears but dimly like the hum
Of a far-distant, unsuspected, sea
In regions of enchantment, therefore we
    Will our two souls dissolve within the cup
    Of one embrace and swiftly drink them up
In an intense and shattering ecstasy.
More royal, more divine, that draught shall be
    Than hers, who in her cup dissolved a pearl
    And watched the whitening acid fume and curl
And drank a kingdom to her Anthony ;
And our two souls consumed shall never feel
The countervailing smart of asp or steel.

### II

If you should tell me that your heart is dead
    And throbs no more in answer to my kiss,
    Whether through surfeiting of utter bliss
Too long continued, or congealed by dread,

Or by the abominations martyréd
    Which fill our sulphurous world's obscene abyss,
    Think not that I shall chide, howe'er I miss
The song that o'er my goings love has shed.
But, oh, the stumbling footsteps in the dark,
  The icy fingers locked in fingers numb,
    Of my lost body, abandoned in that day!
Perhaps love still might flutter like a lark,
  Smitten, above me—but he would me dumb,
    Smitten, unable to wing another way.

III

When all the world about me seems a fen
    Of ooze and bitter rushes, feebly lit
    By false ambitions and base hopes that flit
Before the aimless feet of brutal men;
When all that I have written with this pen
    Seems to set forth untruth and venom spit
    Upon the face of beauty making it
A desecration and a monster; then
Sometimes the thought of thy true love recurring
  Will sweep away the mists about my soul,
    Will let in fragrance of the upper airs:
But, often, not thy very presence, stirring
  That vaporous mood, can cleanse and make me whole;
    And even thy hand of love a dagger bears.

IV

If that should be whereof I fear to dream,
And you, to-morrow, numbered were with those
Who have passed o'er the inevitable stream,
Whose eyes are knit by death into repose ;
No least regret would haunt me that I chose,
Abandoning the sombre world's esteem,
For this one day the livery of the rose,
For this one day love's trumpet-uttered theme.
Before to-day began I had not known
Life's very being and, if so it fall,
The life you gave will die to quit your death.
How could I greatly feel even my own
Passionate longing? You, you have given me all—
Vigour and feeling, body, brain, and breath.

V

Now the still march of evening bringeth near
The thirsty memories of a summer night,
When we did meet together for delight
Upon the very zenith of the year.
Now in the ocean of the atmosphere
(Whereon the stars eternal voyage make)
As though once more they brightened for my sake,
Images of your dewy eyes appear.

But, ah, these hands, desirous to renew
    The mortal touches of immortal love,
As easily might grasp the starry crew
    That sails the inviolable seas above ;
And my heart wearies in its quest for you,
    Fluttering earthward like an outspent dove.

## TO A CERTAIN PROFESSION

MANY words of love you speak,
Counsel men and women weak,
Fear no dirt and no disease,
Work and live on bread and cheese.

You are truthful, man to man,
Grind no axe, no evil plan ;
You will face a drunken lout,
When he kicks his woman out.

You have so much truth to tell,
So much work you do so well ;
Why pretend, that Genesis
More than fairy stories is ?

## THE SPARROW AND THE CHILD

PARSON says no bird can fall
From the house-top, from the wall,
Unless God himself intend
That particular bird to end.

I have seen the sparrow pace
In a much more dangerous place,
Where the motor-buses race :
Yet I never saw the sparrow
Crushed by 'bus, or crushed by barrow.

This is how it comes about :
Sparrows for themselves look out !
Only children, week by week—
London's mangled children shriek.

For religion men have brought
Children under Juggernaut ;
We, with our superior brains,
Kill them while we 're catching trains.

## MAN'S RIVALS

If man could rifle from a rose
The secret—how its beauty grows,
The lapse of time, the room of space,
Would thrill and tremble with his grace.

If man could borrow from a sea
Its fathomless profundity,
No whip of wind, no thunder-roll,
Stirring his sense could stir his soul.

If man could capture from a hill
The iron of its stubborn will,
His fate would flow, a glassy tide
Lapping the bases of his pride.

Vain hope! Each mortal must confess,
Beside the hill, to feebleness;
He is a shoal, beside the sea,
The rose is fairer far than he.

Long after I have passed away
The mountain in its place will stay,
The sea will fill the hollow bay,
The rose be what it is to-day.

## TRUTHS

Ere water to the firmament
  Withdrew and land was made,
God knew Ricardo's law of rent,
  Smith's principles of trade.
But though the world has lost her youth,
  The man of crooked eyes,
In these and every other truth
  Can only see the lies.

## 'THE DAYS OF THE COMET'

SHOULD happy constellations bring to birth
    Messiah, Prince of Peace, predestinate
    To sweep away the clinging mists of hate
From the green rondure of our aged earth,
And were His coming blighted by no dearth
    Of human will—if men should consecrate
    Their strength to lop away in Church and State
What now constricts our noble race's girth,
Then would the great Deliverer behold
New generations, cast in lovelier mould,
    Children within their mothers' arms asleep ;
And He would smile and there would smile again
A rippling multitude of happy men.
    We, thinking of that smile, can only weep.

## A VISION OF LONDON

London trembles! London fears!
  All her castles rock and swing,
Shadowed by the creeping years,
  Haunted by the ghost of spring.

## DAY BY DAY

TRAINS in and out of London bear
  Women and men, each working day,
Who have no business to be there,
  Who have no right to go away.

## THE SCRIP

Down to the river's bending lip
I went for stones to fill my scrip :
I chose me pebbles from the ground
That jingled a right merry sound.

I chose them of all colours rare,
By water painted and by air ;
Of every shape, of every size,
That might befit my enterprise.

But most I love the stones of sooth,
That are as round and white as truth,
Have no appearance, make no din,
And beat Goliath's forehead in.

## IN PIAM MEMORIAM. A. C. S.

### I

WITH a mystical music adorning
  Old secrets of death and delight,
And bright as the star of the morning
  Fed full from the meadows of night,
With rain and with wind and with thunder,
  With voices of sky and of sea,
Thou didst shake men and tear them asunder
  To set the soul free.

All winds out of heaven obeying
  Thy voice that was all of them, whirled
Bright blossoms of singing and praying
  And spread them abroad in the world:
All colour translucent around thee,
  All lights of the nights and the days,
Wove raiment upon thee and crowned thee
  With jubilant rays.

As the sun draws the clouds from the ocean
  His garment and glory to be,
Thine own multitudinous motion
  And murmur came forth from the sea ;
The lisp and the whisper of verses
  That lap us and cover and warm,
The thunderous weight that rehearses
  The weight of the storm.

II

Thou hast left us, a nation that knew thee
  As one who ought not to be known,
That read thee in youth and outgrew thee
  As blossom of youth is outgrown ;
Thy bones in our Abbey to bury
  No popular clamours command,
For verse should be moral and merry
  And written in sand !

Not of thee, not of thee are our uses
  Of prosperous plenty and praise,
Our wearisome wanton abuses,
  Our waste of the nights and the days.
The sound of thy song we are hushing,
  The blood thou didst warm we would freeze ;
And the savourless wine of our crushing
  Hath savourless lees.

But thou sangest of travailing nations
  Made holy by pain and desire,
Of patriots dead in their stations,
  Of murder and frenzy and fire.
To the sound and the thrill of thy singing
  Men saw a new Italy dance ;
Thy tocsin to freedom was ringing
  Republican France.

But thy France was no sooner renascent
  Than covered with stucco and lime ;
Thine Italy rejuvenescent
  Grew old in a moment of time.
In the years of thine age thou wast lonely
  In London, a desert to thee :
Thy heart was in Russia, where only
  Men die to be free.

III

Yet our minds from thy songs have recaptured
  All long-dead, beautiful, things,
And image again, enraptured,
  Forgotten imaginings.
Blown back on thy singing an hour,
  Like storm-whipped, travelling, foam,
Greece is a power, a power
  Imperial Rome.

The gods and the goddesses pagan
  Of beauty and pain and wrath,
In our hearts we throne them, Dagon
  And Baal and Ashtaroth !
From the ocean again Aphrodite
  Has risen, a splendid flame ;
And Pan once more is a mighty,
  A mystical name.

In the pulse of the days we measure,
  In long-drawn, delicate, nights,
In the passionate pain and the pleasure,
  New children of old delights,
In the strength of our bones and our sinews,
  In rosebuds of bosom and face,
The power of thy singing continues
  The joy of our race.

## FRATRI

A TREE of oak, an English oak,
  Compactly knit and bound!
No spindling poplar's hungry spoke,
  No trailer on the ground.
A tree for each, a tree for all:
Umbrageous and ambrosial.

Your feet were planted in the earth,
  The stars were in your hair,
You met and measured from your birth
  The winds of every air;
You added height, you added bole,
Ring upon ring you built your soul.

A sorrow came to try your will,
  To try your heart a pain;
They did but twist the firmer still
  Each sinew of your grain:
Promethean, you towered above
The pain of unrequited love.

You should have lived! We need you yet,
  Your strength of heart and head.
For us the battle lists are set,
  Our war is trumpeted.
Alas, that you the oak should fall:
The tree of oak for each and all.

## THE RIVER

WHERE the river goes
No man answers me,
Only that it flows
Downward to the sea ;
Will it be again
Sea-mist and falling rain,
And again return
To the mountain burn ?

And the course we run
To the goal of death,
Drawing from the sun
Vigour with each breath ;
Shall we run anew ?
Shall I meet with you ?
Will you, coming back,
Find me on the track ?

Only this is sure :
If in after years
We, being made pure
Of all hopes and fears,

On this earth regain
The pleasure and the pain,
The friendship and the strife
That have made our life—

Though you are my brother
You I shall not know!
You will be another,
Not a sign to show
How we stood together
Facing bitter weather,
And together stood
When the days were good.

## AUTUMN

Dampness upon the wall,
And leaves that fall:
Cold, and a sighing breath
That speaks of death;
That calls unto the rose
Which in my garden grows,
And with her dying prayer
Perfumes the air.

Warmth of the burning days,
Flowers ablaze,
And sound of waters heard,
And song of bird—
I garner these apart,
Though summer loses heart,
And winter draws apace
To win the race.

## THE FLOWER OF LOVE

Rose and lily, side by side,
Make a garden's summer pride ;
Rose and lily, in her face
Crown a virgin's summer grace.
Flowers ungathered please me well ;
Would they as sweetly look and smell
If I plucked them ? Who can tell ?

Garden lily, garden rose,
Perish as the summer goes :
Withered leaf and withered stem,
These will soon be all of them.
And no otherwise a maid
Fades as rose and lily fade,
Time in the end will be obeyed.

Pluck the rose and dry it well
To preserve its summer smell,
Press the lily in a book
To retain its summer look ;
Let thy love's virginity
Taken in her summer be
Store of love for her and thee.

## THE HOPE

Does she from all the world secrete
  Passion, as I from her
When my delirious pulses beat
  And all my senses stir,
When nostril, eye and hearing, drink
  Her presence in the room,
And mind and will dumfounder'd shrink
  Like rogues awaiting doom ?

Last night I sat beside the girl,
  And as the minutes crept,
I thought her heart as any pearl
  Cold and unfathomed slept ;
Her eyes nor looked nor turned away,
  She held them motionless,
As idle as the hand that lay
  Half-open on her dress.

Only because the spoken word
  Was caged within her lip,
The spoken word that like a bird
  Can glide and skim and slip ;
Deep down a glimmering hope began,
  That long before I dare
To lay my plan and play the man,
  The woman will be there.

## EDAX RERUM

TIME who scars the frowning cliff
Of Atlas and of Teneriffe,
With his chisel scraping slow
Ravines and ledges for the snow—
Time the same shall scar your face
Weathering its vernal grace.

Countless years a mountain stands
Guarding its adjacent lands ;
Few the years that you shall creep—
Soon you must lie down to sleep.
But the force that conquers you
Shall destroy the mountain too.

## EVE AND ADAM

WHERE the tree of knowledge grew
  I played when I was young ;
Nothing of its fruits I knew,
  Over my head they hung.

I found a boy, he played with me
  In merry wantonness ;
He sang to me below the tree,
  He sang to my caress.

Into my hands an apple fell,
  I tried it with my teeth ;
His eyes ! his eyes ! oh horrible !
  I saw the snake beneath.

## REMORSE

When first I knew that he was dead
  I felt no stab of pain,
I felt that all above my head
  Was bright and blue again.

Days in the sun I basked, before
  There rose above the rim
Of arching sky and ocean floor
  A faint regret for him.

A cloud no bigger than a hand!
  But swiftly it drew nigh:
With hiss of rain and whirl of sand
  It blotted out the sky.

## DEATH

When this uneasy body shall have passed
  Down to the tomb and fallen into clay,
When recollections of me perish fast
  Even in their hearts who love me well to-day ;
I shall not flit about the haunts of men
  To grieve at their scant prizing of my deeds,
Nor find myself an awkward citizen
  Of a weird heaven, thorny with new needs.
Deep in the frozen quiet of the grave,
  Shut from the wind and sheltered from the sun,
Free man no longer and no more a slave,
  Careless of what I did or left undone—
Shall I not rest untroubled, though the tread
Of Time's great legion thunder overhead ?

## THE RETURN

I THOUGHT you dead : I thought you drown'd
  Under a deeper sea
Than any anchorage you 've found
  Since you deserted me.
Too long ago you drove the knife,
  Too long my heart has bled ;
Too late you call me back to life,
  Who am already dead.

## TO A MAIDEN AUNT

Oh half a maiden, half a wife,
  Of ruined halves a perfect whole,
Dear lady of the shuttered life,
  Pot-pourri breathing porcelain bowl,
You were too delicate for strife—
  You should have paid a modest toll!
But Fate, the coward, bared his knife;
  And thieving Death your lover stole.

## THE DEAD LOVE

SPRING music rings across the park
  To summer drawing on,
The winter winds, the cold, the dark,
  The puddled mire are gone:
And bird and beast delighted move
  To meet the voice of spring,
But the deep slumber of my love
  Has no awakening.

## BY THE FIRE

THEY sit together by the fire :
  The man of evil fame,
The woman who has wrought for hire
  A womanhood of shame.

Alternate gleam, alternate gloom,
  Across their features flood :
No sound in all the silent room,
  Except the beating blood.

They join their hands, they join their kiss ;
  Their loves you shall not scorn :
His manhood recreated is,
  Her womanhood reborn.

## THE SUNDIAL

I TELL the sunny hours, the chill
  I leave untold;
I have no word for weather ill,
  For damp and cold;
The thrush, the blackbird, know me well,
  And all the flowers
Awake and listen, when I tell
  The sunny hours.

## THE STARS

THE millions of majestic stars,
  Sweepings of grander space,
Are ranked for no immortal wars
  About God's dwelling-place.

Sun-smitten motes in a chamber dim
  Who pull of earth obey,
Who feel the wind's capricious whim,
  Are ordered more than they.

And like the stars we mortal men
  Jostle and draw apart,
Flung forth by no disposing ken,
  But each as prompts his heart.

Every burning star grows cold,
  And every mortal man:
The difference is 'twixt young and old,
  Greater and lesser span.

## MORTALITY

TREAD out your hopes, tread out your fears.
As one by one the shattered years
Reel to the shadowy flock behind you,
Let no romance of living blind you,
Tread out your hopes, tread out your fears.
The theme that did creation kindle,
  The ancient music of the spheres,
Shall with creation droop and dwindle
  Until all being disappears.
By grace of God, by his own merit,
Shall man the eternal pomp inherit
Of time and space, who are God's peers ?
Tread out your hopes, tread out your fears.

## GRIEF

WHAT is he now and where his place ?
  Since nothing anywhere
I find within the walls of space
  That can with him compare.

The ample motion of a star
  Too strait for him would be,
The beauty of all flowers that are
  Is not so fair as he.

His love was deeper than the seas
  Stronger than any hill,
My heart too dry and empty is
  For all the rains to fill.

And every noble human heart,
  And every lovely limb—
To each I cry aloud : ' Thou art
  No particle of him.'

## THE MILL

SLOWLY it grinds, slow, slow:
Round and round the mill doth go,
And our systems and our laws
Are the grain between its jaws.

They were buried in the earth
Ere the spring brought them to birth,
Blades of green that grew and grew
Under cloudy sky and blue.

They shall perish, they shall be
Sifted, scattered, utterly.
Vain is hope and vainer trust,
The mill shall grind them into dust.

Where no ray of light can creep
Other laws and systems sleep,
Ready at the call of spring
To begin their burgeoning.

## MORNING SUN

GET up and dress: the day is fair
  Beyond all utterance,
The very motes that fill the air
  Begin a clumsy dance.
Two weary weeks the sun has hid
  His face behind the rain,
And now he 's peeping in to bid
  Good-morrow once again.

He burnishes the rusty bed
  With swiftly flashing hand,
He darns the naked carpet-thread,
  He scrubs the washing-stand.
Silver and satin, silk and gold,
  Treasure of loom and mine!
What jugs of alabaster hold
  What water turned to wine!

## A SONG OF THE COUNTRY

When bracken fronds are muddy gold
  And all the leaves are brown,
That were so bright, that were so bold,
  Before the sap went down ;
When all the earth is damp and cold
  And all the heavens frown,
What magics of the country hold
  And witch me from the town ?

The town, the town, is never old,
  As it was never young ;
Of men and manners manifold
  No tiny change has sprung :
Year in, year out, you may behold
  The thoroughfares among
A dull routine of bought and sold
  With trickery of tongue !

More charm for me, by wood and wold,
  Hath nature's tragedy ;
Whereas the ways of God are told
  In herb and hedge and tree.
Each year the tender leaves unrolled
  To green complacency
Shrivel and fall and make new mould
  With tireless husbandry.

## A COMMON SOLDIER

FURL up, furl up, the sorry rag;
  He conquered: he is dead.
Let heaven and not his country's flag
  Be proud above his head.
Oh lightly spoken word of state,
  'Just quarrel has no fear;'
Let justice now reanimate
  The dead man lying here.

Coldly he lies who was so warm,
  The supple limbs are stark,
The purposes that did inform
  His life are cold and dark.
Let coldness gather round the cause
  He gave his life to win,
And freeze the Rights and freeze the Laws
  His death has made a sin.

## MORS IMPERATRIX

DEATH is in the forest heats,
Death is in the dusty streets,
In the waters underground,
On the wind he does abound :
Everywhere he gathers for
Young and old, rich and poor.

For each famed Acropolis,
All imperial destinies,
Famous London, famous Rome,
Heathendom and Christendom :
He has set the fatal term,
Nourishing his chosen germ.

And the nations go and come
As he strikes upon his drum ;
Here the natives fade like flies,
There the invader conquered lies :
Black and white and yellow fill
Years and continents at his will.

## CHRISTMAS 1910

The clouds have swamped the sun from sight,
  The wind, the rain, will never cease,
Night is a pit and day is night—
  To men good-will, on earth be peace!

Behind the dinning of the storm
  That dashes every rattled pane
Are summer breezes, gentle, warm—
  Peace upon earth, good-will to men!

Behind the driven clouds of death,
  Love's ruining and hatred's birth,
A golden glory slumbereth—
  Good-will to men, peace upon earth!

With love, with hope, with courage shod
  We travel on by dale and hill,
Treading the road our fathers trod—
  On earth be peace, to men good-will.

## THE THREE VISIONS

I SAT in dread an hour
  As night drew on :
The room was dark, the fire
  Was nearly gone.

Three visions I beheld
  Of mortal breath,
Shaping itself to birth
  And love and death.

Three moments hath our life
  Of earth and sky.
A man can but be born
  And love and die.

A birth is nothingness
  That grows to being :
Silence engenders sound,
  And darkness seeing.

To the dust of years gone by
  Is stretched a hand ;
It clutches good and ill,
  And gold and sand.

All that a man can be
  His birth has given—
His weakness and his strength
  Of hell and heaven.

Love but accomplishes
  What birth ordains,
Knowledge and ignorance,
  Delights and pains.

All knowledge that we win
  Of men and things
Was as a bird unfledged
  Awaiting wings.

Deep under consciousness
  Were eyes that wept,
And images of joy
  Unfathomed slept.

Till to the night came love—
  A splendid sun !
What was, was seen ; and what
  Could be, was done.

What thing is death ? A night
  That closes over
Beauty and ugliness,
  Hater and lover ?

What thing is death ? A mist
  That stands between
Things known and things forgot,
  Seen and unseen ?

What answer ? No man knows ;
  He only knows,
Lily to lily yields
  And rose to rose.

Two writings I have read,
  Two voices heard,
Two things have felt and touched ;
  Death is the third.

I sat in dread an hour
  As night drew on :
The room was dark, the fire
  Was nearly gone.

## SONG AFTER MARRIAGE

### I

Voiceless all night long we slept,
    And we heard no voice
    Bidding us rejoice ;
But there grew within our heart,
Our one heart that silence kept,
Songs of joy we now impart.

Late last night we came from town
    Virgin youth and maid
    Loving yet afraid,
Found the horses waiting, drove
Miles of mountain up and down,
Miles of night our carriage clove.

So we passed into the room.
    Swiftly we shut out
    All amazing doubt ;
So at last I saw my love,
Saw what beauty and what bloom
Angels see in heaven above.

Night her chariot urged along,
    Side by side we slept,
    And no phantom crept
Into either sleeping brain :
Yet in each of us a song
Stored itself like golden grain.

And our voices men shall hear
    Singing songs to them,
    While night lifts the hem
Of her garment from the earth.
Listen to our singing clear :
A new day is brought to birth.

II

Men shall think the rising sun,
    As he lifts his head,
    As he leaves his bed,
Calls to them to see his light,
Feel his radiance every one ;
Calls to labour until night.

Men shall think that fresh and cool
    The awakened air
    Calls them everywhere,
Over gardens, over trees,
Over meadow, over pool,
Trailing garments of the breeze.

Every night the earth and sky,
    Sacred by the dew,
    Once again renew
Their long lost virginity ;
And they mingle and they lie,
Like young lovers, lovingly.

And the sky does every morn,
    With a smiling face
    Red from earth's embrace,
Bring to birth a child of song.
Once again the word is born
That has gladdened men so long.

Of all things young lovers best
    Do that song declare
    With their voices fair ;
For they gather as they lie
Sleeping, what is more than rest,
Marriage joy of earth and sky.

## FATHERHOOD

WHAT will he be, my boy,
Who now is utter joy
    Of earth and heaven ;
Who has no ugly creeds,
Who nothing is that needs
    To be forgiven ?

Shall he not tell glad hours
Of sun, and sunny showers,
    From May to May,
Lie down with love at night,
And like a lark delight
    In gathering day ?

Shall he not charm the beast,
The greatest with the least,
    In glade and glen ?
Shall he not send his words
Like flocks of singing birds
    Among all men ?

Shall he not face the storm,
Head up and courage warm,
    Whate'er befall;
And in the end depart
With undiminished heart
    When death shall call?

If he must live the years
Of anguishing and fears
    Some men have known;
And as the seasons fly
Labour from sigh to sigh,
    From groan to groan;

If he must ashes eat
Sitting in sorrow's seat,
    If he, my boy,
Being lord of too much pain
Must learn at last disdain
    Of love and joy;

If I have given him life
To bind upon him strife,
    Hunger and thirst;
What man under the sun
Has done what I have done?
    I am the worst.

Better that he were dead
There in his little bed
    Lying above,
My fingers at his throat
And on his lips the hot
    Pressure of love.

## THE PILGRIMAGE

I SAW the first forerunner stealing through
  The forest ; and sometimes a look he cast
Fearful on either hand, as though he knew
  A dragon waited by the way he passed ;
  And he would halt, but ever at the last
Lifted his eyes again toward the distant view.

And whether the path grew green beneath his feet
  And birds sang on a sunny smitten bough
Above his head, or arrowy pelting sleet
  In the open uplands buffeted his brow,
  He went as one who would fulfil a vow,
A pilgrim fearing less adventure than retreat.

And after him came endless tribes and nations,
  Ever more joyful going, as the way
Trodden by feet unnumbered showed the stations
  Safest for sleep at close of every day ;
  Here stood a cross, and there a boulder lay
Or cairn of stones, the deed of earlier generations.

Next men were joined in brotherhood and love
  Which eased their travel, and all about the road
In little bye-paths wandered ; and above
  Their wandering day was splendid, and night glowed
  With stars and ample mysteries to them showed,
Fitted about their temper like a velvet glove.

And still the blue, the distant, mountains seemed
  Earnest of crystal air and ample scene ;
Still as they went each happy day was deemed
  A step toward a joy yet more serene,
  A joy waiting beyond the hilly screen,
The life they lived a journey toward the life they dreamed.

At last I heard how one to another said,
  Now there was time for converse in their going :
' Do we not all too lingeringly tread ?
  Time checks not for us his perpetual flowing.
  What are those joys that hinder us from knowing
The greater joys that wait beyond the mountain head ?

Fair is the rosy-dappled sky when breaks
  Morning, and noble is the perfect noon ;
Lovely the night her rustling mantle shakes
  Before the solemn passage of the moon ;
  Sweet is the sound of water, and the croon
A ringdove in the forest melodiously makes.

All beasts are lovely ; this with painted skin,
  That with deep fleece the fingers loiter through ;
Lovely all trees, all flowers lovely in
  The herbs and grasses diamonded with dew,
  Orchis and meadow-sweet and thyme and rue,
Lovely and scented all they are of the heavenly kin.

And lovelier than all these the pilgrim man
  In whom all beauties centre and grow more rare ;
Mark the clean model of his body, scan
  The rapturous undulations of his hair,
  Rugged sinew of male and rondure fair
Of virgin bosom, all parts fulfil God's perfect plan.

These are the joys our fathers knew, and we
  Know them ; what other joys beyond the ring
Of purple mountains wait, no man may see.
  Yet doth some prescient wisdom deeply spring
  And sing in my heart, as though a bird should sing
Hid melodies half heard in a dense forest tree.

Nay, howsoever ignorant, this we know :
  A supreme power has set us in this way,
Teaching our limbs, else purposeless, to go
  With eager journeyings on it, night and day.
  Knowing but this, what man shall dare to say
The power is not a God which can compel us so ?

And shall God cheat us? If He bid us pass
  Each loop of ivy trailed across the path,
Each rock that paints clean shadows on the grass,
  Full sure I am He does it not in wrath,
  But that some greater joy reserved He hath,
Which our gross thought may picture dimly as in a glass.

For if God purposes great ill to men,
  Why should He wait to exercise His rage?
Here where we walk in this sequestered glen,
  A lust for torture He might well assuage,
  Letting the rocks slip under us and cage
Our mangled limbs, and us like living fossils pen.

Yet if He wills our good, is it not sure
  The road we journey leads to greater bliss
Than what is here provided? The future
  Beckons us onward with a wafted kiss.
  Why else should God not stablish us in this
Beauty of earth and sky through endless time secure?

All this high will of God we men delay,
  We go too softly on our travelling,
Who ever turn aside out of the way
  At friendship's call or for love's dallying,
  To pluck a blossom or hear the skylark sing,
And lose irreparably much distance every day.'

He spake and the words leapt from lip to lip
  Lightly, as sailors when they would unfurl
The corded canvas of a teeming ship
  That from far voyage shall bring back the pearl,
  Or peltry, or rich fleece's golden curl,
Lightly from mast to mast from arm to arm they skip.

I saw that men drew inwards on the road
  And no more went within the forest screen,
But ever more obediently each trode
  There where his predecessor's foot had been ;
  I saw that ever more their anxious mien
Swung to the mountain rim like needle to the lode.

And soon if in the thickets any bird
  Carolled of love and sunshine or if brooks
Made melody, no man heeded ; if they heard
  They stopped their ears, and their averted looks
  Were bent away from nature ; mumbled books
They read and seldom man with other man conferred.

Yet since their hours were not completely told
  In making forward, since no man may pour
All his strong fervour in a single mould,
  What time they ceased from travelling, before
  Their feet they sought to make a smoother floor,
Hills tunnelled or in ravines compacted granite rolled.

And they took thought, deeming to please their God,
  On all who should come after in the way,
That those might swiftly go where they had trod
  Slowly, nor ever by a furlong stray
  Out of the path upon a sunny day
Tempted by fruit or flower to foot the springy sod.

So as the years went on the road was girt
  With walls of granite squared above the eye,
And all betwixt the walls was trodden dirt
  Even and hard, only the thread of sky
  Still seen above them spoke of what should lie
Beyond the walls if man might climb them without hurt.

Now view these nations as I saw them going
  Solemn and stoled in black, each one his glance
Steadfastly on his leader's footprints throwing
  Their hands no gesture have, nor their feet dance,
  Their mind is half on needful sustenance
And half upon the heaven God for their pains is owing.

No later eye shall on their misery look ;
  For a mist gathered, stealing from my view
Them and the weary journey that they took,
  The walls beside them, yea the mountains too
  Were snatched as by enchantment, and there grew
Silence and cold of death ; God had sealed up their book.

## ON GOING TO SLEEP

For every minute of my day
  To God the praise be said,
For daily walk, for daily talk,
  For daily beef and bread!
More than for all His other works
  I praise Him in my bed
For this delight of closing night,
  My golden drowsihed.

Some twenty minutes I shall lie
  By fancies filled and fed,
Before the deep waters of sleep
  Grow smooth above my head;
And twenty thousand visions rare
  Will pass with noiseless tread,
And bind my brains in linkéd chains
  Of golden drowsihed.

No wine of France could tempt me now,
  Nor that diviner red,
Oporto's pride, that years have dried
  And soundly mellowéd,
Nor even the 'jolly good ale and old'
  A bishop worshippéd,
'I am so wrapp'd and thoroughly lapp'd'
  In golden drowsihed.

If Aphrodite, heaven's queen,
  Into my chamber led
A fairer maid, in silks arrayed,
  Than man did ever wed,
Though I had been a year at sea
  I still would choose instead
My dreamy mood of lassitude,
  My golden drowsihed.

Some men have smoked a pipe or twain
  And others books have read,
And still have kept before they slept
  Cold communing with dread;
I need no bottle to my feet,
  No candle by my head—
So soundly locked, so gently rocked,
  In golden drowsihed.

For every minute of my day
  To God the praise be said,
For daily walk, for daily talk,
  For daily beef and bread!
More than for all His other works,
  I praise Him in my bed
For this delight of closing night,
  My golden drowsihed.

## TO ——

Do you like an anonymous letter ?
  You told me at least that you do.
Let that be for want of a better
  A plea for my writing to you !
We were launched far away from each other,
  We drifted together at sea,
A man who of free men is brother,
  A sister of girls who are free.

I saw you a mystical blossom
  Of goddess and woman and wife,
With the rosebuds of hope in your bosom,
  The glamour and gladness of life.
What dews had descended on your head,
  What voice of a lark in the air ?
What planets were under your forehead,
  What velvet of night in your hair ?

You shall dwell in the city of beauty,
  Our Cambridge, all cities above,
Deep-based upon honour and duty,
  Far-shining with friendship and love,
And I—where the dwellings are crowded,
  Where phantoms behind and before
Beleaguer a city enshrouded
  With hate and the menace of war.

Yet the sea throbs over and under
  With voices of infinite reach,
And men disparted asunder
  May borrow the sea for their speech,
And the thrill and the stir of my passion
  Shall pass from the dwellings of dearth,
Go down to the waters and fashion
  Great currents and compass the earth

Crying out, that the life-blood of culture
  Is drawn from the veins of the poor,
That the eagle is kin to the vulture,
  That freedom is built upon war,
That out beyond thought, beyond seeing,
  We bubbles of fugitive breath
Are joined in the glory of being,
  Are joined in the grandeur of death.

## ENVOY

My thoughts, my words, my deeds,
I thread upon a chain—
A record to remain:
Each night I tell my beads,
Each night the silence breeds
Wonder and joy and pain.

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